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5 September 1968  
IHC-D-36/4

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD  
INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION HANDLING COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, IHC

SUBJECT: Intelligence Subject Code (ISC)

1. In January, 1968 CODIB received a memorandum from CIA's Director of Central Reference Service, CRS, indicating that the USIB-sponsored Intelligence Subject Code (ISC) was no longer being used by his organization as a subject index classification system and CRS was, therefore, discontinuing its maintenance. The DIA CODIB member proposed, in view of the extensive and continuing use of ISC throughout DoD intelligence components, that future maintenance of the ISC be accomplished by DIA.

2. The ISC was designed and put into use by CIA in 1948. It was revised in 1960 to meet requirements of the intelligence community and to incorporate changes considered necessary after ten years of experience in its application and use. The revised ISC was re-issued three times incorporating additions and changes in codes necessary to keep the codes responsive to current needs, new terminology, etc.

3. As early as 1957, Air Force Intelligence adopted the CIA ISC with some modifications for use with its [ ] document storage and retrieval system. Subsequently, Hqs SAC and ACIC installed [ ] systems and utilized the ISC therein. At a somewhat later date, the Navy employed ISC in conjunction with its now defunct [ ] system. ISC was subsequently adopted by DIA as its basic document storage and retrieval system [ ] acquired from Air Force. The ISC is also used by DIACO (collections) in connection with the Defense Intelligence Requirements Manual DIRM, and Specific Intelligence Collection Request SICR register, and AIRES (Automated Intelligence Report Evaluation System). In 1964, the use of the ISC area code as published was discontinued in favor of a modification employing the DoD country digraph code, however, close coordination on the subject portion of the ISC was continued by CIA and DIA. The ISC is also used in DoD

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Intelligence components in conjunction with FMA storage and retrieval systems installed in DIAXA, and at STRICOM, CONAD, JAC, USAFE PACAF, ACIC, FTD, AITC, FICEUR, Atlantic Intelligence Center (AIC), NAISL, and PACV.

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Median requests continue to be received and serviced quite frequently.

4. From the IHC point of view the ISC represented a "community" standardization "success" even though its adoption was limited to CIA, and at various times by Air Force, Navy, and DIA. Further, the ISC was never adopted as an all-encompassing standard method of representing subjects and areas of intelligence interest by all of the components of any of these agencies.

5. CIA is at present examining its subject coding requirements and capabilities for the purpose of achieving greater efficiency through standardization. Initial inclination in DIA was toward expanded use of the ISC. However, they are now re-examining and defining requirements for an intelligence thesaurus which may provide the basic DIA system.

6. A number of other agency components in the community are now inclined toward the expanded use of term indexing (keywords) rather than subject classes. Previous attempts along this line have not been without problems which result from semantic and syntactic ambiguities, the occurrence of logical mismatches, input/output inconsistencies, etc., all of which are characteristic of natural language processing.

7. In view of DoD's continuing multi-component use of ISC and CIA's decision to cease its use and maintenance, it is recommended that:

a. Maintenance responsibility for the ISC be assigned to DIA as proposed by them.

b. IHC continue its overall monitorship of the ISC, and

c. If and when DIA determines that it will no longer use the ISC, the need for further maintenance be determined by IHC.

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d. Existing stocks of the fourth editions of the ISC be assigned to the IHC for appropriate disposition.

e. The  data tapes and programs for producing the ISC be retained by CIA/OCS and the ISC reproduction plates be retained by CIA/PS until further notice from IHC.

Executive Secretary

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